What is the Farmers Market Fund?

Community leaders and activists created The Farmers Market Fund (FMF) in 2011 to improve access by low-income and underserved communities to freshly food grown by local farmers in the Portland Oregon metro area. FMF is the charitable companion to Portland Farmers Market (PFM), a non-profit that manages eight markets serving the community. FMF received its 501(c) (3) designation from the IRS in April, 2012.

What does the FMF do?

Fresh food is for everyone! With this value in mind, we currently manage three projects:

- We offer a nutrition incentive program called Fresh Exchange (FE), currently available at four neighborhood PFM markets. FE provides a dollar-for-dollar match up to $5 for recipients of federal SNAP benefits (the largest domestic hunger safety-net program) to buy fruits, vegetables, seeds, edible plant starts and locally made meats, breads and cheeses.

- FMF leads a coalition of 14 regional farmers markets that also offer SNAP incentive programs. The coalition shares best practices, combines fundraising efforts, explores new techniques to make markets attractive to low-income families and seniors, and collects, analyzes and presents market data using common protocols. Collectively, we develop new programs through our expertise in farmers markets operations, our community ties and experience with data collection and analysis.

- FMF publishes a “Farmers Markets Are for Everyone” guide listing the 36 regional farmers markets that accept SNAP benefits, including the 14 coalition markets. A previous Templeton grant funded research which informed this brochure.

Why is FMF’s work important?

Oregon ranks as one of the hungriest in the nation. Half a million Oregonians experienced food insecurity in 2009 - 2011. One in five receives food stamps. The 2014 Farm Bill cut $89 million dollars from the SNAP hunger safety net, making local solutions to national issues more important. According to the local food bank, over 270,000 Portland area families seek emergency food assistance. Approximately 92,000 of these are children.

Oregon is also challenged with high rates of obesity. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 45 percent of adults in the greater Portland region are obese or overweight. Native Americans, African Americans, adult Hispanic and low income people have the highest incidences of obesity in Oregon. Emerging research shows that a diet rich in fruits and vegetables may help prevent obesity and the development of chronic diseases, such as type II
diabetes and cardiovascular disease.\textsuperscript{1} There is also a growing body of research that indicates fruit and vegetable intake may reduce oxidation, inflammation, cell proliferation and other important disease-related processes.\textsuperscript{2} The health benefits of fresh food are increasingly clear, especially for children.\textsuperscript{3}

The experience of farmers markets across the country that offer cash incentives to match SNAP benefits shows that incentives can help increase consumption of fruits and vegetables by low-income shoppers.\textsuperscript{4} It is this information that gives FMF confidence that while our incentive programs have and will improve the access to farmers markets for these shoppers, our programs also improve healthy eating and reduce health costs.

**What is the Farmers Market Fund trying to accomplish?**

FMF’s goal is to increase significantly the consumption by low-income populations of fresh, local food to reduce food insecurity and improve public health. FMF relies on farmers markets as its preferred vehicle of access to fresh, local food because of the unique social, environmental and community-building roles the markets play in the region. FMF’s Templeton funded focus groups composed of low-income populations and our consultation with social service organizations helped us identify barriers to bringing in more SNAP shoppers. Barriers identified include:

- lack of information about market locations, dates and times
- perceptions that farmers markets are more expensive
- lack of cost comparisons, costs per serving, recipes and meal plans
- difficulty accessing markets by public transportation
- difficulty navigating the markets, including the elderly, disabled and parents with children.
- perceptions that SNAP cannot be used at the markets and transactions are complicated.

\textsuperscript{1} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dietary Guidelines, 2011; Healthy Foods, Healthy Communities: Promising Strategies for Improve Access to Fresh, Healthy Food and Transform Communities, Policy Link, 2011; Fruits, Vegetables and Health: A Scientific Overview, 2011.

\textsuperscript{2} Fruits, Vegetables and Health: A Scientific Overview, 2011, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{3}Young children who receive SNAP benefits are 26\% less likely to be “food insecure” than eligible children who do not receive benefits. Childhood Food Insecurity, OSU Professional and Continuing Education, p. 24.

\textsuperscript{4} 90\% of Double Value Coupon Program consumers reported increasing their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. Wholesome Wave 2012 Program Highlights. 78\% of customers reported that, because of the Fair food Network’s “Double-Up Food Bucks” (SNAP cash match) in Michigan farmers markets, they increased the amount of fruits and vegetables they bought. 2012 Evaluation Report, p. 2.
FMF is taking action to address these barriers. We just completed a Cost Comparison Study which dispels myths that farmers markets are more expensive than grocery stores. Fresh Exchange provides a cash match for the first five dollars of SNAP benefits spent at the markets. FMF will begin a second cash incentive program – market vouchers distributed through social service agencies – in the 2015 season. Voucher programs in Corvallis and Portland have been shown as effective incentives to overcoming the cost perception barrier.

FMF’s “Farmers Markets Are for Everyone” pamphlet lists markets that accept SNAP incentive programs. FMF distributes the guides to low-income families and seniors through social service organizations, Oregon State Department of Human Services offices where benefits are distributed.

FMF’s coalition is wrapping up a SNAP participant survey at the 14 markets. We are collecting and analyzing market data using common protocols to measure the impact of incentive programs. The coalition is combining fundraising efforts for efficiency and effectiveness. This collaboration has led the coalition to share proceeds and direct them to the neediest populations. Enhanced fundraising will put more incentive dollars into these hands. Sharing best practices, such as simpler systems for SNAP/match transactions at all incentive markets – will make the markets more inviting to SNAP shoppers. Market data indicate that these measures are bringing new low-income shoppers into the markets.

How does the Farmers Market Fund fit into food and health-related activities in the Portland metropolitan region?

The region has a vibrant network of organizations that reach virtually every point along the food-health spectrum, from protecting the farmland base to appropriate disposal of left-over food and nutrition labeling. FMF focuses its energies toward a most critical point on the spectrum: supporting local family farms and getting fresh food on the dinner table for families at the highest risk of hunger, food scarcity and health-related illnesses.

Who supports the Farmers Market Fund?

FMF raised $31,700 in 2013 from individuals, businesses and foundations, Kaiser Health Foundation, New Seasons Markets and Alberta Cooperative Grocery prominent among them. Recently we were accepted to participate in Willamette Week’s Give!Guide for the third consecutive year.

FMF received a tremendous boost in 2014 from two major grantors:

1. Meyer Memorial Trust awarded a two-year, $40,000 grant to build FMF’s capacity. Allowing us to hire a part-time Development and Program Coordinator to raise money and expand programs.
2. Kaiser Permanente granted $20,000 to increase our number of individual donors, create
a seed fund for cash incentive programs at the region’s markets and to collect data to
evaluate the impact of SNAP-incentives programs at markets in the region.

The Proposal

Building on Success

The Templeton Foundation’s 2012 grant supported FMF’s first project aimed to bring more low-
income shoppers into PFM’s four neighborhood markets. FMF used the funds to identify –
through focus groups of low-income seniors and families – the principal barriers that keep
many users of SNAP benefits from shopping at farmers markets. FMF used the results of that
research to design a guide (entitled “Feast on Freshness”) to address the barriers. The guide is
distributed by social service agencies directly to SNAP users in Portland (more than 1,000).

In 2013, Portland Farmers Market recorded approximately 4,000 transactions by SNAP
shoppers, who spent $45,200 in the markets. SNAP shoppers received $23,200 in Fresh
Exchange dollars ($5 matches). Since inception in 2009 through 2013 shoppers redeemed
$193,000 in SNAP benefits at these four markets and received $98,311 in matching funds.
The Feast on Freshness guide brought new low-income shoppers into the neighborhood
markets. But misperceptions about markets remain and continue to discourage low-income
families and seniors from shopping at farmers markets. FMF proposes to build upon what it has
learned from its 2012-2013 Templeton-sponsored project with a second approach: work
directly with individual low-income families and seniors to determine, and overcome, the
specific barriers that keep them from shopping more often at farmers markets.

The Project

The new nutrition incentive program incorporates two elements: Vouchers and Individualized
Marketing. A voucher is similar to a coupon, given to SNAP beneficiaries by social service
agencies and other community partners. Field-tested research and experience show
distribution of customized information through personal contact with individuals is far more
successful than broadcast advertising or distribution of written materials. Participants in FMF-
sponsored focus groups agreed that their continued patronage of farmers markets programs is
greatly improved by working with people they trust. Known as “individualized marketing”, the
technique has been used locally with great effect.

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5 King, Northwest, Kenton and Buckman Markets.

6 The Portland Bureau of Transportation and TriMet used individual marketing successfully to persuade drivers to
increase their transit, bicycle and walking trips for their daily travel needs.
The Templeton Grant would fund FMF’s first voucher program. This pilot program would roll out in 2015 at the Kenton Farmers Market. The Kenton neighborhood is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods in Portland. Over one-third of its residents identify as members of a minority population. The young Kenton Market (started in 2012) has seen a 3% increase in SNAP transactions in 2013 over 2012 when the Fresh Exchange program began there. SNAP shoppers comprised over 4% of Kenton shoppers in 2013.

Here’s how the program will work:

1. FMF will work with Cesar Chavez and Peninsula Elementary schools to identify low-income families who live near the Kenton Market. These community partners will screen participants based on a variety of factors, including income and minority status.

2. School staff will contact the families to ask if they would be willing to commit to full participation in the Kenton voucher program: complete an application and initial survey; attend the market at least four times during the 2015 season; and complete a follow-up survey. Based on funding, we expect up to 40 families to participate, with some attrition.

3. At their first trip to the market, participants will receive and redeem their first voucher. They will also receive a market orientation, affordable recipes and direct access to farmers and other community resources, including FMF Fresh Exchange Program. Most importantly, they will receive educational information which studies have shown to have the most lasting impact on healthy eating behaviors.

4. At each market visit, participants will receive a voucher for their next visit, up to four for the season. Every participant who completes the program, including an exit survey, will receive a free basket of market food items.

5. Evaluative data, feedback from participants and community partners and further analysis of our pilot project will allow FMF to create an adaptable model to be replicated in other market neighborhoods in the greater Portland area.

The Kenton Market voucher program will serve as a pilot for vouchers and individualized marketing. After evaluation, if successful, the program may serve as a model for nutrition incentive programs nationwide.

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7 N. McClellan Street & Denver Avenue.
2015 Timeline

March: FMF will work with its partner organizations (to be selected by the end of 2014)

May: FMF will meet with participants; collect demographic and other data to assist in tracking and program analysis and to provide an overview of the program.

June: Kenton Market opens and voucher program begins.

June-Sept: Participants receive up to four free vouchers to purchase fruits and vegetables at the Kenton Market. They also receive recipes and enjoy market events. FMF will keep in touch with partner organizations to evaluate the program and adjust as needed.

Oct-Dec: After the final market, participants will complete an exit survey. FMF staff will prepare final evaluation and program outcome measures. FMF will present final report to Templeton Foundation.

Budget

A $7,000 grant will cover the following:

- Participant Support: Four $25 vouchers for 40 families to redeem over the Kenton Market season
- Support Materials and Activities: outreach materials, applications, recipes, educational materials, healthy food demonstrations and other events.
- Program Management: Development, Implementation, Oversight, Analysis, Reporting and Revision

How will FMF determine whether the project is successful?

FMF will deem the program successful if:

- 50% of participants complete the program.
- 75% increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables.
- 50% express interest in continuing to shop at the farmers markets.

FMF will compare initial survey results with final surveys and evaluations from participants to measure to what extent participation changed food choices and meal preparation, and shopping habits of participants. Final participant surveys will also indicate their overall satisfaction with the program and changes they recommend for future voucher programs.